Declining trend in rain fall

4385. SHRI RAM GOPAL YADAV: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a declining trend in rainfall due to damage caused to the ecology; and

(b) if so, what preventive measures Government propose to take to avoid the loss due to less rainfall?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) Scientists have analysed long term rainfall series over various parts of the country and concluded that the short term fluctuations above normal and below normal rainfall are random in nature and do not reveal any, significant change in climate.

Project of Chilka Acquatic Farm Limited

4386. SHRI S. K. T. RAMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to refer to the answer to Starred Question 104 given in the Rajya Sabha on 15th July, 1992 and state:

(a) whether Government have cleared the Project of Chilka Acquatic Farm Ltd., for prawn culture in chilka brackish water lagoon; and

(b) what are the conditions, laid down in the clearance order?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Conversion of land by the Wasteland Development Authority

4387. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is slow progress in the conversion of lands by the Wasteland Development Board in the country; and

(b) what is the total targetted land conversion by the Board and what is the achievement so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) The National Wastelands Development Board is not concerned with conversion of land. The mandate of the Board is to guide and oversee the Wastelanls Development Programme aimed at checking land degradation and putting wastelands in the country to sustainable use, increasing biomass availability, specially fuelwood, fodder and forest produce, and restoring the ecological balance. The Board is also the nodal agency at the Central level to coordinate and monitor the afforestation and tree planting activities under the 20 Point Programme. During the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), a total area of 8.8 million hectares was covered by these activities against a target of 8.6 million hectares.

Achievement of first phase of Ganga Action Plan

4388. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a controlversy about the achievement of the first phase of Ganga Action Plan and purity of its water, is going on at present, in the country;

(b) whether the promise of Late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that the Ganga will be free from pollution has been fulfilled;

(c) if not, the reasons thereof; and

(d) further steps contemplated in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (c) Ganga Action Plan was launched in 1986 for pollution abatement

of the river and to improve the water quality to bathing standards. To achieve the same, 261 schemes for interception and diversion, sewage treatment, low cost sanitation, electric crematoria, river front facilities and others were taken up. It was targeted to intercept, divert and treat 873 mld waste water out of an estimated 1340 mld waste water being generated from 25 class I towns along Ganga. 191 schemes have been completed so far which has resulted in interception and diversion of 485 mld of waste water. Also 210 mld out of 260 mld of industrial waste generated by 68 gross polluting units is being treated as a result of enforcement of legal measures. In places where the interception and diversion schemes have been completed or industrial effluents treated, there is a marked improvement in the water quality in terms of dissolved oxygen and bio-chemical oxygen demand.

(d) It is proposed to expedite the completion of the remaining schemes at the earliest.

Special Enironmental Courts

4389. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the proposal for setting up of special environmental courts is pending for a long time and if so, since when;

(b) the reasons for delay in setting up of these courts; and

(c) by when these courts are likely to be started functioning?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (c) A proposal to set up a National Environment Tribunal was initiated in 1990 to provide strict liability for damages arising out of any accident involving hazardous substances and also to provide for compensation and interim relief to the affected persons. The proposal is under the consideration of Government.

"RIO declaration on role of women"

4390. SHRI SHIV PRATAP MISHRA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Rio Declartaion has stressed a vital role to be played by women in environmental management and sustainable development; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development reads as follows:—

"Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development".

(b) The Government of India fully endorses the above mentioned principle. The need to bring women into the mainstream of development has been a national concern since Independence. A separate Department of Women and Child Welfare has been established already. The National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) provides the directions for all round development of women. The strategy in the Eighth Five Year Plan is to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not by pass women and special programmes are implemented for this purpose, particularly in regard to education, health & nutrition, child development, employment and improving the environment and quality of life of women in general.

New method to increase forest cover

4391. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news item which appeared in 'The Observer' dated 4th August, 92 captioned "New Method to increase forest cover":